

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. in the East Room at the White House, following the screening of an episode of the Home Box Office production. In his remarks, he referred to John F. Kennedy, Jr., son of President John F. Kennedy; Jeff Bewkes, chairman, Home Box Office; and actor Tom Hanks.

Proclamation 7072—National Older Workers Employment Week, 1998

March 5, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans are living longer, healthier lives. As a Nation, we are witnessing a dramatic growth in the population of Americans aged 55 and older, a trend that will continue well into the next century. To maintain our dynamic economy and to fill the jobs of the 21st century, we must make the most of the creative potential and productive capacity of this growing segment of our society.

Unfortunately, many Americans aged 55 and older encounter serious difficulty finding employment when they lose their jobs or seek to change careers. Employers too often focus on the age of older workers instead of their qualifications and strong work ethic. By failing to recognize the wealth of skills and experience older workers can bring to their jobs, such employers deny them an equal opportunity to make their own valuable contributions to the American workplace.

To counter these challenges, laws and government programs offer older workers the protections and services they need to ensure fair employment opportunities and practices. The Age Discrimination Act, the Older Americans Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act protect the basic rights of millions of older working Americans. The Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services also assist older workers through such efforts as the Senior Community Service Employment Program and the programs of the Administration on Aging.

Older Americans actively contribute to our communities through their hard work, wisdom, and experience. They have rightly

earned our admiration and respect; they have also earned a fair chance at a good job. As we observe National Older Workers Employment Week, I urge all employers, when they hire new workers, to consider carefully the skills and other qualifications of men and women aged 55 and older and to fully utilize this rich national resource.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 8 through March 14, 1998, as National Older Workers Employment Week. I encourage all Americans to recognize the contributions that older workers make to the workplace and to our economy, and I urge public officials responsible for job placement, training, and related services to intensify their efforts throughout the year to help older Americans find suitable jobs and training.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 10, 1998]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 6, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 11.

Remarks on the National Economy

March 6, 1998

Good morning. Today we received more good news for our workers and our families. Our economy added another 310,000 new jobs last month; real wages continued to rise; unemployment fell to 4.6 percent, the lowest level in a quarter century; and more Americans are sharing in the prosperity. Hispanic unemployment, for example, fell to a record low.

The American economy has now added more than 15 million new jobs since I took office. Inflation has remained low and stable.

We continue to have the strongest economy in a generation, the lowest unemployment in a quarter century, the lowest inflation in 30 years, the highest homeownership in history. We're on track to have the longest peacetime recovery in the history of our country. These are good times for America.

But how shall we maintain this momentum? We must first press forward with this new economic strategy. It is working. We must do more also to continue to create high-wage jobs. And finally, we must make sure that our people have the skills to fill them.

The new economy is increasingly driven by creativity, innovation, and technology, with high-skill jobs growing at nearly 3 times the rate of other jobs. In the field of information technology, the hunt for employees with high-tech skills is becoming more and more intense. There are hundreds of thousands of vacancies out there in America right now.

The key to expanding opportunity is education and training. Through our new HOPE scholarships, the lifetime learning credits, education IRA's, expanded Pell grant scholarships, better student loans, we've opened the door to college for all people of all ages who are willing to work for it.

Recently, we learned that our high school seniors lagged behind the rest of the industrial world in math and science. We must do more there. We must work to raise standards, reduce class size, improve teaching, have people taking more challenging courses, and increase accountability.

But we also, to look at the immediate situation, must do more to reform our job training system. For more than 3 years, I have called on Congress to consolidate the tangle of training programs we have today into a "GI bill" for workers, to create a network of one-stop career centers, to increase accountability, to ensure results, to empower people to gain the skills that are in greatest market demand. Secretary Herman and Secretary Daley, who are here with me today, are working in particular to address the job shortage in the information technology area.

Now, last year a bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives passed a bill that would achieve the goals that I have called for for years now. A similar bill has attracted bipartisan support in the Senate. I'm encour-

aged by reports that the Senate is likely to take up this legislation. In the wake of these employment numbers, with unemployment low and the crying demand for higher skills and still people in some of our inner-city neighborhoods and rural areas unemployed, I ask the Senate to pass this bill and send it to me so that I can sign it into law. The legislation is essentially to help more Americans win in today's economy and to keep our recovery going.

Unemployment is low, job growth is strong, our economy is expanding at a healthy pace. We are uniquely poised now to widen the circle of opportunity for the 21st century. Passing the "GI bill" for America's workers is one of the best ways we can continue to grow.

Thank you, and thank you to the economic team and congratulations to the American people. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on Senate Action To Continue the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Initiative

March 6, 1998

I am pleased that the Senate, in a strong bipartisan vote of 58 to 37, today retained the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program within the ISTEA bill, which provides expanded economic opportunity for women- and minority-owned businesses. This program was enacted into law under President Reagan in response to extremely low participation rates by women and minorities in federally assisted highway and transit construction projects.

In particular, I want to applaud Senators Baucus and Chafee, who garnered widespread support for the continuation of this important program.

Today's vote reaffirms my administration's "Amend it; don't end it" approach to affirmative action and promoting equal opportunity. We are now one step closer to getting an important, multi-billion transportation bill enacted into legislation.